

■ **I notified the EAP that I made a supervisor referral. My employee said he went to the EAP, and I was relieved, but something flopped because he hasn't changed. The employee said the EAP had no suitable recommendations. Should I refer the employee somewhere else?**

Although an employee may seek help independently, you should not make a referral to another source of assistance that has not been established for assessment and referral purposes. Since you notified the EAP you made a referral, you are entitled to know whether the employee made and kept an appointment. The EAP's policy is to contact a supervisor and confirm whether or not an employee who was referred for job performance concerns met with an EA professional. If you were not notified, you may call to follow up. You will not, however, be given specific details about what happened in the EAP assessment. It's important to remember that how an employee chooses to act on the EAP's recommendation or referral is outside the EAP's or the supervisor's control. The bottom line is that an employee's responsibility is to meet job performance expectations, and it is important that the supervisor's focus remains on performance.

■ **I have many employees whose performance I must document, but my write-ups are often delayed by days and I frequently lose important details. Are there things I can do to improve my recall?**

If you can't write documentation right away or must delay it for hours or days, your memory will fade. One solution is to memorize a six-question outline. Whenever an incident occurs, go through the questions mentally, which may help jog your recall more effectively later. Or, you may write down the answers to these questions quickly and retain them to assist you later: 1) What happened? 2) When—date and time?; 3) How did you respond? 4) How did the employee respond/react? 5) How did the incident affect productivity? 6) What was concluded at the time of the incident? Jotting down your answers should not take more than 30-40 seconds, but even a simple mental rehearsal will improve your recall and make documentation better when you're finally able to get to it.

■ **Things are pretty "loose" in our work unit. We get together after work and know each other well. Work culture includes a**

Talk to the EAP and discuss a way of turning this around and curtailing this type of communication. If you swear at each other when things are going well, what happens when things are not going well or when you have an employee you need to correct or discipline? It's possible you are swearing at these times as well. The foul language is a risk issue. As a manager you are condoning a disrespectful communication style

lot of swearing at each other, but it's never serious. In fact, I would say we have affection for each other. Is the swearing a problem? Should I try to get it to stop?

as a normal part of your work culture. If a complaint was lodged, you would face a difficult time explaining how this is affectionate communication. Intentions would count for little. An employee who claimed that the work environment was offensive and hostile would have a good argument. You have a responsibility to protect employees from a hostile and offensive work environment, and it is difficult to imagine that the sort of interaction you have described supports that goal.

■ **Can the EAP help our work unit learn more about treating each other with respect? Respect means a lot more than tolerance for one's ethnic or racial differences, right? I think at least some in our department need it. Where do we start?**

Speaking with your EAP about respect and how to manage your work environment to promote a respectful workplace is a good place to begin. The EAP will explore with you different ways to assess your needs and deal with your concerns. The EA professional may discuss how to address specific employee performance issues and how to make an EAP referral based on job performance concerns. He or she will also explore various EAP presentations that may be beneficial. Respect means many things. Some work groups may have problems with diversity and respect but have no problems with things like rumors and gossip that damage morale. Another work group may respect diversity but may have developed a demeaning, critical style of interaction that is harmful and non-productive. Getting an overview of your work unit's culture and needs is a necessary starting point.

■ **Our agency has experienced a lot of change, including layoffs. The unit I manage hasn't had layoffs yet, but the future is uncertain. My employees keep asking me questions that I cannot answer. As stress builds, I find myself avoiding talking to my staff. Can the EAP help?**

During periods of workplace uncertainty, employees often exhibit a strong *need to know*. Experts who study stressful work environments, such as many workplaces are currently experiencing, emphasize the benefits of ongoing communication. Consider these suggestions: 1) Provide whatever information you are authorized to give truthfully and candidly. When managers are credible, trust is built and rumors are diminished. This creates a more productive work environment. 2) Seek suggestions from employees for improving work flow. Involving employees in the decision-making process provides a sense of greater control, which can help stabilize a work unit in spite of future uncertainties. 3) Review changing job responsibilities or roles. Give regular feedback, addressing performance problems and validating jobs well done. 4) Remind your employees often that their work matters and is appreciated. 5) Don't forget to take care of yourself during this stressful time. Remember, the EAP is a resource available to all employees, including supervisors and managers.

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